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ADMIRATION OR REVULSION: INTERPRETING THE LIFE, CAREER AND CHARACTER OF SIR JAMES PERROT (1571-1637)

By Roger Turvey

Part One

Sir James Perrot was the bastard son of an unfairly alleged bastard father, the infamous Sir John Perrot of Haroldston. Like his father, Sir James tended towards arrogance, intolerance and not a little impetuosity but he was also a man of principle who proved steadfast in the face of adversity. Unlike his father, Sir James was a man of considerable learning, a humanist scholar and intellectual who authored several works during his lifetime, and a skilled parliamentarian of no mean repute. Historically, the reputations of both have suffered to a degree, for although they have attracted criticism and praise in almost equal measure, the whiff of scandal is never far from the lips or pens of the less discerning who sacrifice truth in favour of rumour, tale and lie. In the case of his father, illegitimacy, royal paternity and treason are among the more colourful charges laid against him, while his son has been labelled a religious bigot, an insensitive bully and a narrow-minded hypocrite. Sir James has his champions, those who see in his parliamentary career a man of outstanding ability and in his religious beliefs, a Christian of passionate, if puritan, piety. As befitting the complexities that attend the human character, the truth is likely to lie somewhere between the two, so that to understand the man it is necessary to explore the more significant aspects of his life and career both of which shaped his character.

Life

Perrot lived for nigh on sixty-six years. It was an extraordinarily full life much of the detail of which still elude us today and will continue to do so until he finds his biographer. That much remains to be discovered, how much only time can determine, is suggested by the fact that in the last thirty years our knowledge of the man has improved immeasurably. New sources of information coupled with new lines of inquiry have enabled historians to flesh out a life beyond the expectations of a card-index biography. Here it is possible only to present an outline of those

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aspects of his personal life that might help us to better interpret and understand the man.

Birth and early life

Sir James Perrot was born of an illicit affair between his father and an otherwise, and hitherto, unknown Sybil Jones of Radnorshire. That theirs was no short liaison but a longstanding affair of the heart is suggested by the deputy-herald for Wales, Lewys Dwnn (d.c.1616), who states that Perrot's mistress bore him two children, a son James and a daughter Mary.¹ At the time of Dwnn's writing, in 1596, James' sister was already married to a gentleman by the name of David Morgan who hailed from Abergavenny. That he remained close to his sister and her family is suggested by the bequests in his will in which he left the princely sum of £60 to be divided equally between his nephew and two nieces.² When, how and where Perrot's parents met and how long their affair lasted are not known, nor are they likely to be, but that his mother was of gentle, if probably minor, stock may be supposed from Dwnn's acknowledgement of her in the pedigree he compiled on behalf of the family. What became of her we can but wonder but at no time is mention or provision made for her either by her lover or later by her son.

If the identity, and much else, of his mother remains to be solved so too does Perrot's date of birth. According to the matriculation register of the University of Oxford, Perrot was aged 14 years on 8 July 1586.³ If the record is accurate, and there is no reason to dispute its veracity within a given twelve-month time frame, this would place Perrot's birth sometime between late July 1571 and late June or early July 1572. Fixing his birth date is of no small consequence for it co-incides with his father's posting to Ireland as Lord President of Munster, a fact which may have a bearing on whether Sir James Perrot was Welsh or Irish born. Appointed in December 1570, Perrot's father journeyed to southern Ireland in February 1571 and remained there until his return to Wales in July 1573. If, as Perrot's most recent biographer, Andrew Thrush, believes, his birth occurred sometime in 1572 then he was not only 'probably born in Munster' but conceived there also.⁴ This presupposes the taking by his father of his mistress to Ireland, a practice not altogether unheard of but certainly unusual, especially in this instance given the rigorous, and dangerous, nature of the appointment which was less administrative than

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military in character. If, as seems likely, and certainly in the absence of evidence to the contrary, Perrot's mother remained in Wales, then he must have been conceived sometime prior to his father's departure for Ireland which would suggest a birth date of no later than October 1571.

Unsurprisingly, his place of birth is far from certain but is thought to be the now-lost but once fine mansion house of Westmead near Pendine in Carmarthenshire.⁵ Tradition early links him with this Perrot-owned manor, certainly from boyhood, but the fact that he was referred to, as a teenager, as being 'late' of that place by his own father in the spring of 1584, is proof of a close association.⁶ Besides its possible use as a convenient and congenial extra-marital home for Perrot's errant father and mistress mother, Westmead would have served as a fitting place in which to raise a freely acknowledged illegitimate son. Unfortunately, the details of Perrot's early life and upbringing are lost to us but it might reasonably be presumed that he and his sister Mary were brought up together by their mother. To where he moved from Westmead before entering Oxford is not known but it could hardly have been Haroldston, as has been suggested by some, given the sensitivity of the relationship and the fact that Sir John Perrot's eldest son and heir, Sir Thomas, lived there. Indeed, there is no evidence to suggest a relationship between the half-brothers let alone an acknowledgement of James by Thomas of whom no mention is made in the latter's last will and testament of February 1594.⁷

Sir John Perrot's acknowledgement of his illegitimate offspring was made formal in a settlement of his estate, dated 29 May 1584, drawn up prior to his departure for Ireland as Lord Deputy the following month.⁸ In it, he declared that his property should descend in survivorship to those of his own blood and name, or at least 'to such of his name as he liketh and careth for', namely, his heir Sir Thomas (d.1594), by his first wife Ann Cheyney (d.1553), William (d.1587), by his second wife Jane Pollard (d.1594), and Sir James.⁹ The prospect of James succeeding to the vast Perrot estates must have seemed so remote that his father prepared him for a profession, most likely the law, hence his sending to Oxford University, more precisely Jesus College, and to the more socially exclusive of the Inns of Court, the Middle Temple.¹⁰ He did not graduate from the one and, as far as is known, did not complete his legal studies

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in the other, but such was the nature of education at that time, it did not matter, and nor would it necessarily hinder a future career. Indeed, Tudor education was as much social as academic and Perrot would have benefitted by being in the company of men who often came from backgrounds similar and greater than his own. It was a place where friendships, contacts and alliances were made and some of those with whom Perrot became acquainted either went on themselves to wield great power and influence in the realm or were related, or known, to those who did. Certainly, it was one of the reasons why Sir Thomas Myddleton of Chirk (d.1666) was so keen to secure a place at Jesus College for his son and heir:

but if he come not, there will come as good men and great as hee, my Lord Chamberlayne's two sonnes, and the house at this time has the best gentry of South Wales and therefore let not the place be thought too meane, or the Company forsooth too sordid for him to converse with.¹¹

Perrot may not have left Oxford with paper qualifications but he did leave with something greater, at least to his mind, religion. Calvinist teaching and the puritan ethos were strong at Oxford so that it is no surprise to learn that Perrot became a convinced and devout calvinist, a deep puritan faith he retained for the rest of his life. Conversely, he acquired a deep loathing and distrust of catholicism to the extent that tolerance did not enter into his thinking or vocabulary. In view of his deeply held beliefs and prejudices it is stupefying to accept that he should marry a catholic recusant, a fact that would be used against him later in his career.

Friends and enemies

Perrot's fellow students at Jesus College, Oxford, included two from his own shire Nicholas Adams of Paterchurch (d.1628) and Thomas Canon of Haverfordwest (d.1638). The first became a close friend and associate the other his 'professed enemy'; but, unlike Perrot, both became lawyers, the first preceeding his friend to the Middle Temple while the latter received his legal training at Clifford's Inn and Lincoln's Inn.¹² Nicholas Adams, five times mayor of Pembroke and twice MP for the borough, often acted as Perrot's trustee and assisted him in his fight to recover the

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Perrot family estates. Others on whom Perrot could rely for support, and presumably call friends, were Henry White of Henllan, Devereux Barrett of Tenby, Thomas Lloyd of Cilciffeth, James Bowen of Llwyngwair.¹³

Sir Thomas Canon (he was knighted in 1623 for services to the Crown – mainly efficient tax collecting!) was a man of learning, of considerable intellect, a talented lawyer and an efficient administrator. In short, he proved a formidable opponent. When and why Perrot and Canon fell out is not certainly known but the hatred between them was intense enough to survive more than thirty years of bitter rivalry. One suggestion puts Canon at the forefront of the legal campaign to deny Perrot his claim to his father's forfeited inheritance. That he supported Perrot's opponents cannot be denied but the reason why he should do this, particularly as his father Maurice Canon had been among Sir John Perrot's staunchest allies in county politics, is not known. Besides Canon, Perrot made an enemy of Sir John Wogan of Boulston (d.1636), another former ally of his late father, but at least here the cause of their falling out can be traced to their rivalry in local politics and administration.¹⁴

The Perrot family inheritance

Within months of his half-brother's death in February 1594, Perrot sought to invoke the settlement of 1584 in which he was named heir to his father's estates. However, he immediately encountered problems not least in the fact of his father's attainder, so that the properties to which he could now lay claim had dwindled to include only those which had been inherited by the family, restored to Sir Thomas Perrot within four months of his father's death in the Tower under sentence of death, as opposed to those granted by the Crown in lease or life-grant. Further impediments presented themselves, his illegitimacy and the counter claims of his half-brother's widow, Dorothy (d.1619), of her daughter and heiress Penelope (d.1647) and of a cousin Thomas Perrot of London (formerly of the Brook near Westmead). When Dorothy Perrot married Henry Percy (d.1632), 9th earl of Northumberland, in late 1594 or early 1595, Perrot was faced by a powerful enemy aided and abetted by the persuasive legal advocacy of Canon. It took over ten years before Perrot was able to secure, piecemeal, a sizeable share of the Perrot patrimony. The matter of his inheritance was largely resolved in 1608 when he obtained a royal licence to hold those lands which had formerly belonged

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to his father.¹⁵ The price of his success was high in that he was expected to meet in full all outstanding debts left by his father and half-brother, as well as continue to pay an annuity out of his estates to satisfy the claims of his ex-sister-in-law Dorothy and her daughter Penelope. Although he was involved in litigation until at least 1619, Perrot had managed to reassemble an estate of over 3,000 acres at the heart of which lay Haroldston, which he secured in 1597, and in which he would live for the remainder of his life.¹⁶

Marriage and family

It was to Haroldston that Perrot brought his bride Mary Ashfield. As with so much about Sir James Perrot's life we do not know when they married, almost certainly by the summer of 1602 if not before, how and where they met, or if the marriage was part of a social and/or political arrangement. Very little is known of either Mary or her family other than they hailed from Ashridge in Chesham, Buckinghamshire, and were modestly wealthy esquires. Her father Robert did not lead a particularly distinguished life and much of his public career was spent within the county. That Perrot spent time with his in-laws is shown by a letter written by him at Ashridge to Lord Zouche in 18 December 1605.¹⁷ Nine days earlier Perrot had been writing letters from Haroldston so that his journey to the home of his in-laws in Buckinghamshire was presumably to co-incide with the Christmas festivities.¹⁸ It is known that Perrot had two daughters by his wife Mary but neither survived to adulthood. The name of one is known, his first born, Cicil, who was so christened in honour of Robert Cecil (d.1612), 1st earl of Salisbury whom he lobbied for support over the recovery of the Perrot estates.¹⁹

Perrot was very much a family man. He maintained close relations with his sister Mary, and his half-sisters, Lettice and Ann, daughters of Sir John Perrot by his second wife Jane, and Elizabeth, another of his father's illegitimate offspring. Other than her marriage to John Butler of Coedcanlas (d.1629), and the fact that her children were well provided for in Perrot's will, little is known of Elizabeth.²⁰ On the other hand, Ann seems to have shared her half-brother's love of literature and religious prose, hence the dedication to her in Robert Holland's book *The Holie Historie of our Lord*, published in 1592.²¹ After her death Perrot seems not to have maintained contact with her children especially as his rela-

tionship with her husband Sir John Phillips (d.1629) appears to have been distinctly cool. On the other hand, Lettice, her children and her three husbands – Rowland Laugharne of St. Brides (d.1587), Walter Vaughan of Golden Grove (d.1598) and Sir Arthur Chichester (d.1625) – figure prominently in Perrot's life.²² He was chosen, doubtless with his father's approval seeing he was but fifteen years old at the time, to be godfather to Lettice's first born Thomas Laugharne (b.c.1585) to whom, 'as a small token of my love and affection', he willed substantial properties in Dale.²³ In fact, Perrot had intended to make his godson heir to his entire estate and had the necessary papers drawn up in 1609, all he required was a financial settlement in consideration of the entail from Lettice and her third husband, whom she married in April 1605, Sir Arthur Chichester. Unfortunately, none was forthcoming and less than a year after the death of his beloved sister in 1621, he cancelled the entail of 1609 and had a new one drawn up in 1622 in favour of the five-year-old son of a Herefordshire esquire, Robert Perrot of Morton-on-Lugg (d.1657).²⁴

Why Perrot should leave almost his entire estate to the Perrots of Herefordshire has long perplexed historians. As early as c.1700 when the Dale Castle pedigrees were being copied down, the unknown copyist stated, 'To this Sir Herbert did Sir James Perrott of Haroldstone, knight, dying without issue, leave his estate for name sake more than proximity of blood, as being not at all of kinne'.²⁵ It was a theme taken up by the Perrot family biographer E.L. Barnwell who, by his series of articles and later publication of 1865-67, influenced later generations of historians by giving credence to this myth.²⁶ In fact, the Perrots of Herefordshire were indeed related to their Pembrokeshire cousins, if only very distantly, and they were able to prove the link in a bitterly contested court case brought against them, in 1639 by Thomas Perrot of London, for illegally using the Perrot family arms.²⁷ As if to add insult to injury, in the same year they also had to defend themselves in another court case brought by John Laugharne, younger brother of Perrot's lately deceased godson Thomas, who tried to have the 1622 entail and 1637 will overturned; he failed.²⁸ Perrot had got to know the Perrots of Morton in London where Robert, and his brothers Richard (d.1623) and Francis (d.1642), were employed, the first as a clerk in the Exchequer, the second as the trusted agent of Lionel Cranfield (d.1645), 1st earl of Middlesex and treasurer to King

James, and the last as a prosperous merchant in the city. Perhaps the most important point of contact between Sir James and Robert was their mutual interest in matters literary and genealogical. They corresponded and shared information and both were members of an antiquarian network of like-minded authors and genealogists.²⁹

Death and burial

On 26 January 1637, Sir James Perrot drew up his last will and testament ‘in manner and forme followinge revokinge and disannulling hereby by deed and in lawe all former Wills and Testam’ts by mee heretofore made’.³⁰ It is interesting to note that the first person named, and to whom he willed substantial property and rents, was his godson Thomas Laugharne. How their relationship had fared after Laugharne had, effectively, been removed as the main beneficiary of the will in 1622 is anyone’s guess. It is equally noteworthy that if Thomas were to die childless, Perrot had willed that the property granted to him should pass to his brother Essex Laugharne. No mention was made of the youngest brother John which oversight, apparently deliberate, may have motivated his case, in 1639, against the eventual heirs, the Perrots of Morton. It is only after he had dealt with his heir Herbert Perrot of Morton (d.1683) that Perrot turned to mention his ‘welbeloved’ wife Mary. She was to have

all my plate and lynnен that I am owner of and as touching my household stuffe and implements of husbandry that I have at Haroldston aforesaid my will is and I doe give and bequeath the same to my said Wieffe duringe her widdowhood and afterwards to remaine in the said house at Haroldston aforesaid to the said Harbert Perrott and his heires for ever.³¹

It was hardly the most generous of gifts but at least she got to live in Haroldston for the remainder of her natural life which, in the event, lasted little more than two years for she died in May 1639.³² Perrot willed that he be buried beneath the chancel in the church of St. Mary’s, a fitting resting place given his love for and service on behalf of the town, at which location, ‘on the south side of the chancel, not far from the east end’,³³ a tomb was erected to his memory. Unfortunately no trace of this, presumably once fine tomb complete with Perrot heraldry, now exists, being removed sometime after 1836 when it was described by a visitor

to the church.³⁴ His wife Mary was buried with him and next to them was buried James Perrot (d.1683), a younger brother of Herbert and second son of Robert who, in light of his benefaction, probably named his son after Sir James.

Career

If Perrot can be said to have had a vocation then politics must surely have been it. He spent the best part of thirty years attending to parliamentary business of one kind or another and although the House sat for only a fraction of that time, his thoughts were never far from a chamber in which he made his name by ‘shewing himself a frequent and bold, if not a passionate speaker’.³⁵ It is in respect of the parliamentary side of his life, for which we have the most evidence, that Perrot is chiefly remembered, and most frequently cited, by historians, but he was a man of many parts carving out for himself a career in local politics and administration, in Ireland and in academic and literary pursuits. He was, in short, a man of wide and extraordinary talent.

Local Politics and Administration

The gradual piecing together of the family’s landed inheritance, and the aid he received from such patrons as Robert Devereux (d.1601), 2nd earl of Essex, enabled Perrot to take a more active and prominent part in local affairs. His career in local administration began with his appointment in 1598, as Justice of the Peace for the county of Pembroke, a position he filled, with one short break between 1615-23 when he was struck off the Pembrokeshire bench for offending King James, until his death in 1637.³⁶ Not content merely to remain an ordinary magistrate, feeling no doubt that the Perrot name should, as in times past, carry more weight, he petitioned the Crown in 1601 to be appointed *Custos Rotulorum* (custodian of the rolls or chief magistrate) which, on being confirmed, caused a rift between him and his rival for the post Sir John Wogan of Boulston.³⁷ It must have been a bitter blow to Perrot to have lost the friendship of a family, the Wogans of Boulston, who had been steadfast adherents of his father. There is no evidence to support the suggestion that Wogan’s hostile attitude was due to Perrot being base-born, rather it was due to a natural shift in the pattern of political and familial alliances the nature and complexities of which may seem strange to us today.

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Perrot held the position of *Custos Rotulorum* until 1609 when it was relinquished to his rival's cousin Sir William Wogan of Wiston (d.1625). Not that this hindered his career for in 1608 Perrot was appointed to one of the most important offices in the county, that of deputy lieutenant of Pembrokeshire.³⁸ This gave him wide powers of mustering the county levy, drafting troops for service, supervising the stores of armour and ammunition, and collecting money and loans. These duties brought Perrot much prestige and, should he be disposed to be vindictive, the office afforded him ample opportunity for inflicting injury upon his rivals. Perrot seems to have discharged his duties diligently and without the accustomed charges of corruption. Although formally appointed deputy lieutenant by the Lord President of the Council of Wales and the Marches, Ralph, Lord Eure (1607-16), he probably owed his promotion to the influence of his new patron William Herbert (d.1630), 3rd Earl of Pembroke. Herbert's father Henry (d.1601), 2nd Earl of Pembroke, had held the Lord Presidency of Wales for the last fifteen years of his life while his brother Sir Edward (d.1595) and their father William (d.1570), 1st Earl of Pembroke had both been close friends of Perrot's father Sir John. Therefore, having had to transfer his allegiance after the disgrace and execution of Devereux in 1601, it is perhaps natural that Perrot should find a willing patron in Herbert whom he served loyally, with the odd hiccup, until the latter's death.³⁹

Although he does not figure in the office of deputy lieutenant after 1627, by which time he was 56 years old, Perrot's administrative career was far from over. In fact, he was gainfully employed in a host of other offices among the most important of which was his appointment as deputy Vice-Admiral for Pembrokeshire in 1611.⁴⁰ It was a potentially dangerous and often thankless task to police the coasts of south-west Wales having to contend with pirates and smugglers not to mention the threat of foreign invasion. As if that was not bad enough, the temptation to accept bribes for turning a blind eye to illicit trade and other illegal activities was so strong that only the richest or most honest office-holder could resist. Indeed, corruption was thought to be endemic, even by contemporaries who saw an opportunity not only to snipe at their enemies but to accuse them openly of trafficking with pirates. Even 'pious' Perrot was not above suspicion, and in 1631 he was called to account by the Crown acting on information supplied by Sir Thomas Canon.⁴¹ Much to Perrot's

chagrin, Canon obtained a commission to investigate his enemy's activities and the affair rumbled on for two years until it was dropped in 1633. Lack of evidence, Canon's prejudicial handling of the affair and firm support for Perrot from his late patron's brother and heir Philip Herbert (d.1650), 4th Earl of Pembroke, brought to a close a most unsavoury affair.

In truth, to find Perrot guilty would have been a travesty of justice particularly as he had himself conducted a commission of inquiry into piracy off the coasts of south Wales in 1623.⁴² His conclusions leave us in no doubt as to his honesty and his determination to expose the corruption that existed, principally among the lesser office-holders. As a measure of the esteem in which Perrot was held by some sections of the Pembrokeshire community, his name (and, ironically, that of his enemy Wogan of Boulston) was among the first to be proposed to the Crown in 1634 as someone 'most fitted' to lead a commission to deal with the ever worsening problem of piracy.⁴³ The fourth earl of Pembroke's appointment in 1631 as Vice-Admiral of South Wales in succession to his brother, almost exactly a year after the latter's death, ensured Perrot a continuing role as his deputy. Although he remained in post until his death, it is clear from a remark attributed to him, that he found the office more trouble than it was worth, having spent £6 more than he had received in payment for fulfilling his duties. Evidently Perrot was an honest man and had it not been for his loyalty to his patrons, the Herbert earls of Pembroke, he would have willingly surrendered his office 'to those that court it more'.⁴⁴

Evidently more to Perrot's liking was his appointment to a series of offices from which he too could profit politically, territorially and financially. Assisted by the patronage of the earl of Essex, in 1601 and 1602 Perrot secured from Queen Elizabeth life-grants to several stewardships of Crown lands in south west Wales namely, the tripartite manors of the lordship of St. Clear's – Traean March, Traean Clinton, Traean Morgan – the lordships of Carew, Cilgerran Walwyn's Castle and Syke, and the manors of Benton, Cosheston, Fletcherville, Folkeston, Honeyborough, Nolton and Robeston West.⁴⁵ So confident was he in his administration of these properties that in the case of Robeston and Folkeston, he secured them on lease to do with as he willed. Thus did he

bequeath the unexpired years of his lease to both properties to his nieces and their husbands.⁴⁶ The fact that some of these stewardships had once been held by his father, while some of the manors and lordships had once been owned by him, must have been a source of great satisfaction for Perrot. Great as his accomplishments had been in reassembling the Perrot family estates they were not enough in themselves to guarantee him a secure place among the county élite. Unlike in his father's day, there were richer and larger landowners in Pembrokeshire, and more powerful, compelling reasons to explain why he opted to attempt the domination of the county and borough of Haverfordwest.

According to an ordinance of 1554 the squires of Haroldston (and Prendersgast) were the only 'foreigners' eligible to be burgesses of the town.⁴⁷ More than that, they were also eligible to serve in the town's government, a mark of distinction that highlights the close relationship that existed between Haverfordwest and Haroldston. Consequently, Perrot had to wait until the Haroldston estate had been restored to him before he could play a full and active part in the affairs of the county and borough of Haverfordwest but once this was achieved, he lost little time in cementing his place in the town's administration.⁴⁸ That the Perrot name still counted for something in a town which continued to benefit from the generous bequest (1580) of Sir John Perrot, can be seen by the speed with which Sir James was adopted as candidate to represent the borough in parliament.⁴⁹ Hardly had he moved into Haroldston, in 1597, than he secured the first of five nominations to stand for election as the town's parliamentary representative. In the first three of these elections he encountered little or no opposition, partly through apathy but mainly on account of the support he was able to generate within the town.

The stage was set for further appointments and in 1601 he secured a life grant of the office of Justice of the Peace in the county borough. He followed this up by becoming a member of the Common Council of Haverfordwest soon after the accession of James I in 1603.⁵⁰ Thus, Perrot became a member of a very select group, one of only 'twenty four of the most honest burgesses' according to the town's charter of 1479, which 'formed the governing body of the corporation that ordered and managed its general affairs'.⁵¹ Upon the renewal and clarification of the town's charter in 1610 Perrot was made alderman of the town, which position,

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next in importance to the Mayor, he held for life.⁵² Of course, the height of civic ambition was the Mayoralty and in 1604-5 Perrot secured election to that office also, a feat he was to repeat twice more in 1623-4 and 1633-4.⁵³ In the second of these elections Perrot secured victory in the teeth of bitter opposition organised by his enemy Sir Thomas Canon. By the mid-1620s Canon had succeeded in gathering a formidable faction about him and by dint of his service as Mayor, on no less than five occasions between the 1590s and 1620s, and generous patronage, he increased his influence within the town. His rivalry with Canon notwithstanding, Perrot immersed himself in the life of the town securing commissions from the Crown to oversee the collection of the subsidy of 1622 and, something of a poisoned chalice, subsidy arrears of 1626.⁵⁴ Ironically, one of those whom Perrot pressed for payment of the subsidy was Canon whose refusal to contribute to the king's coffers, ostensibly to fund foreign wars, earned for him an entry in the list of defaulters for Pembrokeshire.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, Perrot's involvement in the commercial side of borough life is not well documented but in so far as trade facilitated the accumulation of wealth, it is likely that Perrot, among others, took advantage of his privileged position to further his mercantile contacts.

Parliament

The career for which Perrot was most fitted was undoubtedly politics. According to Howell Lloyd, he was one of the talented few 'who may be spoken of as having enjoyed anything approaching a parliamentary career'.⁵⁶ He was a political animal, one who possessed the natural instincts of a politician, and his arena was the House of Commons an institution he graced with his presence, and to which he was elected seven times, for over thirty years. Politics is a competitive, and combative, business and no more so than at times of election as Perrot was later to discover. His brusing encounters at the county and borough hustings made him, and deepened further already made, life-long enemies. In the Commons too Perrot had to rely on a thick skin and ready wit, anything in fact to survive the machinations of his rivals, but here at least he found what might be regarded as his spiritual home. By dint of hard work and his considerable talent he made more friends in the Commons, and acquired more admirers, than he did enemies. The Commons provided him with the tools to fuse to an outstanding degree, his ripeness of intellect and powers of leadership. He was more a leader than a follower

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and in three successive parliaments – 1604, 1621 and 1624 – he was among those who set both the tone and the pace.

His political career began brightly enough when he was returned unopposed as Member for Haverfordwest in September 1597. The fact that barely two dozen of the near hundred burgesses or freemen qualified to vote, bothered to turn out indicates the extent to which Perrot owed his representation to the influence exerted on his behalf by his patron the earl of Essex.⁵⁷ Ironically, Perrot hardly distinguished himself in this parliament, being content to remain anonymous and only once venturing to participate on committees, such as that for Newport bridge to which all Welsh members were appointed. He had yet to acquire a taste for parliamentary life and did not, as far as is known, stand for election to the 1601 parliament, the last of Elizabeth's reign. When next he attended the House, in 1604 for which he was again elected to represent Haverfordwest, he took a more active part, being one of a hundred commoners and forty peers who met with King James to discuss 'the blessed and happy Union of these two kingdoms' of England and Scotland.⁵⁸ It was to the accession of James, and no doubt due to the intercession of powerful patrons, that Perrot owed his knighthood which was likely bestowed in anticipation or on the occasion of the king's coronation in July 1603.⁵⁹ His participation in parliamentary business over the next three years can be measured by the fact that he sat on no less than forty committees. His work on these committees dealt with such diverse, and mainly mundane, matters as free trade, unlawful fishing, husbandry and tillage, alehouse keepers and the quality of beer brewed from malt. Thus Perrot gained invaluable experience in the day-to-day running of Commons committee work which gave him an insight into the structure and conduct of parliamentary business.

Perhaps as a measure of the esteem in which he was held by his colleagues, particularly his perceived legal expertise, Perrot's opinion was sought on such matters as the 'reformation of the abuses in the court of Marshalsea' (to which was attached a notorious prison in which his father was once temporarily lodged for brawling), the reform of 'abuses of wide and wasteful writing of English copies in court record' and 'the reformation of one branch of a statute for restoring to the Crown the ancient jurisdiction over the state spiritual and ecclesiastical'.⁶⁰ It was

clear also that Perrot, as a passionate Puritan, was early acquiring a taste for matters connected with religion and religious legislation, and his speech of 5 May 1604, 'a long and learned discourse touching matters of religion', was described by the Clerk of the Commons as 'very good'.⁶¹ Some of his critics were rather less flattering and they tended to mock his growing reputation for godliness as in the irreverent 'Parliamentary Fart' of 1607 in which he was made to declare, 'it grieves me to the heart to hear a private man swear for a public fart'.⁶² Besides religion, Perrot was adding other interests to his growing parliamentary *curriculum vitae* not least of which was his developing experience, and later expertise, in the minutiae of parliamentary procedure. His interest in procedural matters, the complexities of which were but dimly comprehended by the majority of his parliamentary colleagues, may be traced to his appointment in June 1607, and to which he was reappointed in successive parliaments, to the committee for privileges. It was in connection with his work on that committee that Perrot took a leading part in negotiations with the Crown on the increasingly thorny issues of purveyance and supply. The king's financial extravagance tended to undermine his relations with parliament which became soured by mutual suspicion. Perrot had some sympathy for the Crown's financial plight and said so in a Commons speech in which he reminded the House that the king's difficulties stemmed, in large part, from an inherited debt of £400,000 and the fact that its annual expenses exceeded its income. He approved of measures to increase the Crown's revenues from sources outside parliament but was reluctant to approve funds raised from within unless the 'King's wants' were linked to the redress of grievances. It was to Perrot and several other Members that the House turned to present the king with a list of grievances. It took another three years of negotiation before both parties were presented with a radical plan – The Great Contract – to solve the Crown's financial impecuniosity. The proposal, put forward by the king's chief minister, Lord Treasurer Robert Cecil (d.1612), 1st Earl of Salisbury, to ask parliament to make a one-off grant of £600,000 towards the Crown's debts and to pay the king an annual sum of £200,000 in return for James' agreement to give up his rights to purveyance, wardship and some other lesser revenues, was rejected.

Although Perrot was keen to make the Crown more accountable for its financial expenditure, a theme to which he was to return some years

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later, he did not take part in the parliamentary discussions surrounding the Great Contract, the failure of which led to the disgrace and dismissal of Cecil. Perrot's main concern was that parliament should be treated with respect and not seen or used by the Crown as a convenience to be hired and fired at will. To him and some others like him, it was an institution that stood for more than simply the raising and collection of money, and its prime constitutional role was considerably more than as a meeting-place to offer advice to the Crown, rather it was, or should be, a place for the doing of business, both royal and private, a legislature with the means and the power to involve itself in matters of national government. This is not to suggest that Perrot was, in any way, a visionary, he did not, as his political successors like Oliver Cromwell were later to do, seek to replace the Crown with parliament. His views were very much in tune for the time with those who sought to expand its role and legislative capacity hence the growing sophistication of parliamentary procedure and in the Commons' committee system. Consequently, Perrot became a staunch defender of the rights and privileges of the House of Commons, a vociferousness, moreover, that earned for him a reprimand from the king during the brief, and so-called Addled Parliament of 1614.⁶³ Departing from his usual circumspection in matters royal, he launched an astonishing attack on the king's (mis)management of the royal finances when the latter tried to bully parliament into supplying him with money, via the so-called Impositions, by threatening to dissolve it. He went so far as to question the king's need and right to issue such impositions, an action that severely strained his relations with his patron Pembroke. It was to be the first of many encounters between Perrot and the Crown, and though the latter attempted to quieten the voice of this increasingly irritating critic, Perrot stubbornly refused to be silenced. Indeed, had it not been for the support of, and occasional intervention on his behalf by, his patron, the earl of Pembroke, it is likely he would have become better acquainted with the lodgings furnished within the Tower. While some of his more outspoken colleagues were carted off to cool their heels in prison Perrot's punishment was limited to his being comfortably detained in London for a week after which he was struck off the Pembrokeshire bench.

The peak of Perrot's parliamentary career was reached in the session of 1621. Returned for the fourth time in succession as representative for

Haverfordwest, he threw himself into the business of the house which included, among many issues but principally for him, religion and matters of parliamentary privilege. One the very first day of its meeting Perrot proposed a Members' communion not only 'that this Parliament may have a religious beginning' but, perhaps more sinisterly, to act as 'a touchstone to try our faith' so that 'the faith of those in the House' would be known.⁶⁴ This done, Perrot settled down to resolve what for him, and for many others, was to be the main business of the session, the issue of free speech and the royal prerogative. The reason for the urgency of the debate was the Members' desire to avoid the fate that had befallen four of their number in the Parliament of 1614, all of whom were arrested and imprisoned in the Tower for having delivered 'intemperate speeches in the chamber'.⁶⁵ In a speech that Howell Lloyd has claimed 'amounted almost to a statement of policy', Perrot pointed out that the House's freedom of speech was under threat by the passing of a recent royal proclamation which forbade the king's subjects from discussing matters of State. In a cleverly constructed speech that attempted to steer a middle path between deference to – 'if we differ with our equals to have it done in love, if with our superiors to have it done with respect' – and criticism of – 'permission in us [but] practice in them' – royal authority, he proposed that the House should petition the king and his ministers to define exactly what were to be considered 'matters of state' and what were not.⁶⁶ He instanced an example of the confusion that might ensue by highlighting the Palatinate crisis, in which England was being called upon to lend its support to a fellow Protestant state, the Elector was James's son-in-law, against Catholic enemies, stating 'how shall we treat of provision for the Palatinate and not meddle with matters of State?'.⁶⁷ In the event, and in spite of general support for Perrot's proposal, the House vacillated and opted instead to appoint a committee to decide whether to approach the king by written or oral message.⁶⁸

The unease which characterised relations between some members of the House of Commons, Perrot foremost among them, and the Crown during this parliamentary session went as far as to include members of the House of Lords. When it was proposed that a joint conference between the Lords and Commons be convened to discuss and resolve the latter's objection to the king's speech that 'matters of state' should 'not to be treated of in the Commons chamber', Perrot was vociferous in his

opposition.⁶⁹ His suspicion of the Lords stemmed from what he perceived to have been their uncooperative and disrespectful treatment of the Commons in the Parliament of 1614. Indeed, his antagonism towards the Lords was made manifest a short time later when he objected to their request that certain gentlemen from the lower chamber be asked to give evidence on oath concerning inns and hostelries, claiming not only that there was no precedent for this, but that it was 'a disreputation to the gentlemen to be drawn upon oath, as not trusted'.⁷⁰ Yet, in his dealings with the Lords, Perrot was always careful not to implicate his patron, the earl of Pembroke, in his criticisms nor was he wont to attack those whom Pembroke considered either friend or, for expediency sake, political ally. Another of the Lords to whom Perrot paid his respects was Robert Devereux (d.1646), 3rd earl of Essex, son of his first patron and, as his later conduct in the Civil War was to show, a man sympathetic to the parliamentary cause. In fact, Perrot had been instrumental, as part of a parliamentary committee (1604), in restoring to the young earl the family's estates forfeited by his father's rebellion and execution for treason in 1601.⁷¹

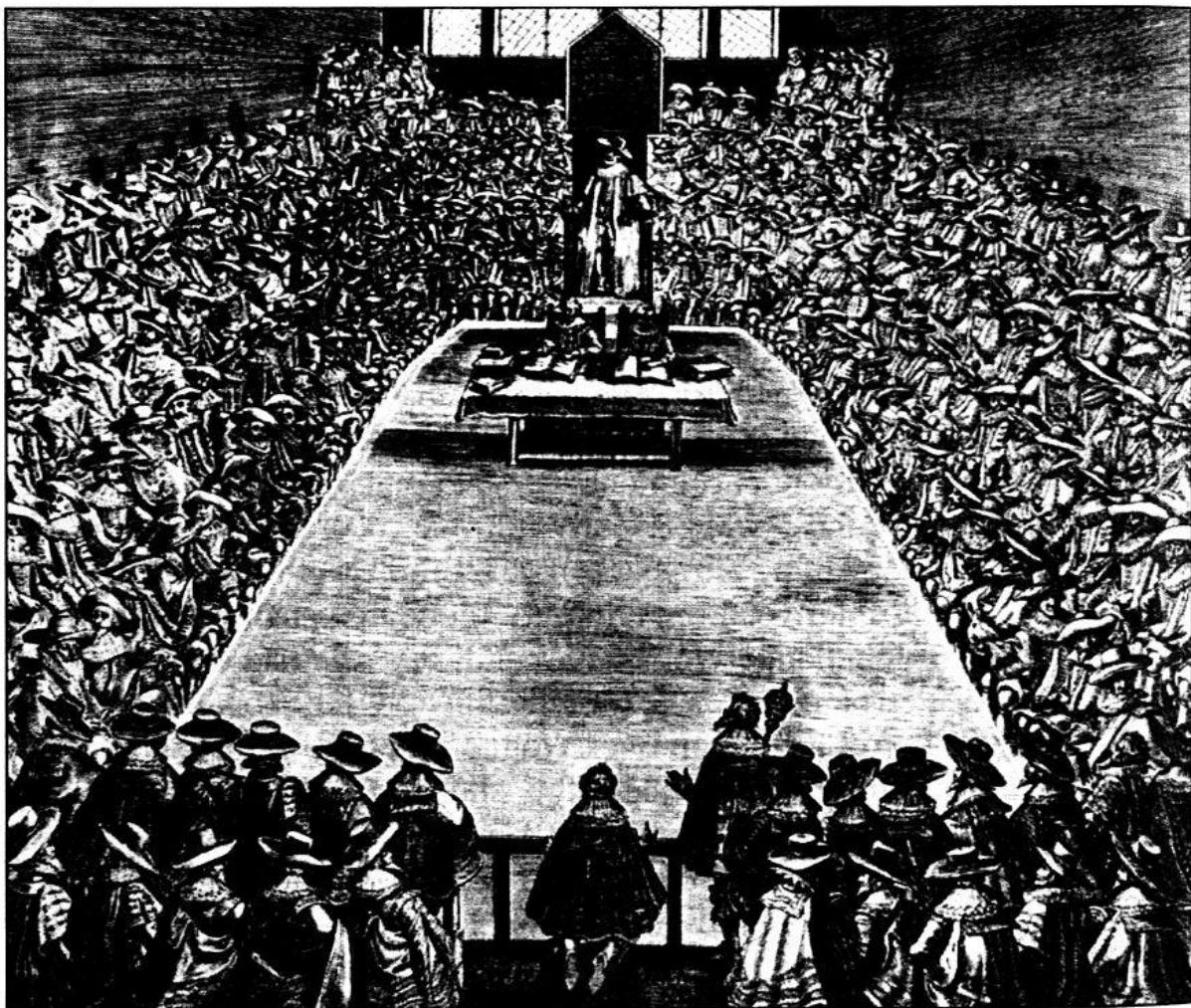
If, as has been claimed, Perrot 'emerged as a leading voice of opposition in matters of fundamental difference with the Crown',⁷² there is no reason to suppose he bore any ill-will towards the Stuarts personally and certainly not against the institution of monarchy in general. Perrot was no republican and he remained faithful to, if often irritated by, the Crown to which, when the occasion demanded, he was as keen as other of the king's subjects to display his loyalty. It is a fact that he usually refrained from direct attacks on either the king or his ministers but preferred to mount his challenges bound up and cloaked in the business of the House. Thus did he lead the House in thanking the king when the latter, under some pressure, agreed to hear the accusations, in which Perrot played no part, of bribery and corruption against the Lord Chancellor Francis Bacon (d.1626), 1st Viscount St. Albans. Perrot's proposal that King James be thanked 'by some near the Chair', presumably the Speaker, for his 'generous message', was almost unanimously approved by the Commons.⁷³ In a speech that betrayed his acknowledgement of the sensitivity of the relationship between the Commons and the Crown, Perrot was at pains to stress that there had never been a conscious attempt to cause trouble nor was the belligerent attitude of some members of the House indicative

of the feeling of all who sat there. However, James, according to one of Perrot's earliest biographers, Anthony Wood, thought differently, and numbered Perrot 'among the ill temper'd spirits therein (as the King usually call'd them)' for which he 'was sent with Sir Dudley Digges and others into Ireland for their punishment'.⁷⁴

When parliamentary elections were next called in 1624, Perrot took the decision to contest the county rather than the borough seat. It was a fateful decision that earned for him the enmity of Sir John Wogan of Wiston (d.1644), a powerful landowner and a man accustomed to representing the county in parliament. The fact that Wogan's contribution to parliamentary business was virtually nil, one recorded intervention in a political career spanning 26 years, reveals the extent to which status and prestige rather than vocation and duty motivated such men to attend the Commons. To challenge Wogan's ascendancy was bad enough but to unseat him as Perrot did was a humiliation too far. To add insult to injury, it seems Perrot's triumph over Wogan was only achieved by guile inasmuch as the returning officer, the sheriff of the county, James Bowen, esquire, of Llwyngwair (d.1629), was induced to hold the election at the home of Sir John Stepney (d.1626) at Prendergast rather than in the shire hall of Haverfordwest. Wogan's complaint to the Commons fell on deaf ears since his objection was deemed to have been lodged late and outside the time limit allowed for such protests. Historians have long speculated on Perrot's reasons for seeking election for Pembrokeshire rather than for Haverfordwest where, unlike in the county, his influence was secure and he had no serious rivals. Two possible reasons have been put forward, firstly, knowing that the greater prestige was attached to county rather than borough representation, Perrot may have felt that it was time that his parliamentary status should more accurately reflect his standing within the shire. Secondly, having previously witnessed the expulsion from parliament of mayors accused of returning themselves, he feared that as a serving Mayor of Haverfordwest, his right to represent the borough might be challenged.

In the event, the Commons committee for privileges reported that 'the election and return of Sir James Perrot is due and good' and he was allowed to take his seat.⁷⁵ The same cannot be said for Perrot's hapless

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House of Commons, 1624.
(British Library, Harleian MS. 159, fol. 2).

successor in Haverfordwest, Lewis Powell, whose election was vigorously disputed by Sir Thomas Canon. It is likely that having given up the borough seat to one of his nominees Perrot had unwittingly provided Canon, his professed enemy, with the opportunity to undermine him in his powerbase. Perrot had left himself open to attack on two fronts, in the borough and in the county, an error that was to have far reaching consequences in future elections. Once safely esconced in the House of Commons, Perrot turned to dealing almost exclusively with matters of religion, more specifically, the perceived threat from within by Jesuits and Seminary priests and other popish propagandists on behalf of the catholic church. He was one of the many who supported a motion for war with Spain which he believed to be not only the most belligerent of

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the catholic powers, but the state that was most likely behind the training and funding of Jesuits for treasonable service in England. Perrot was all for rooting them out and he was especially keen for the penal laws to be enforced against home-grown papists and ‘other of the king’s enemies’. Unfortunately for him, it might have been discovered, most likely by his enemies, that his own wife was herself a papist since there can be no other reason to explain why he should publicly declare her recusancy. This revelation must have caused the puritan Perrot considerable embarrassment and no doubt came as a great shock to many of his colleagues. Fortunately for him, his contacts in the House and his widely respected parliamentary expertise saved him from being disbarred from holding office and his name was ordered to be removed from the Pembrokeshire certificate. Andrew Thrush has suggested, with good reason, that it was probably a mischevious Commons that appointed Perrot soon after to the committee for the bill to levy more quickly the fine payable by married women who failed to attend church.⁷⁶

Prorogued in May 1624 and dissolved upon the king’s death in March 1625, a fresh parliament was called for June. A confident Perrot fully expected to be returned to the first Caroline Parliament but he was to be bitterly disappointed. Having stirred the county gentry by his audacity in the election of 1624, he now roused the most powerful of them to anger by his impudence in seeking to represent Pembrokeshire for a second time. Consequently, an over-confident Perrot was ambushed by his rival Wogan whose ruthlessness stunned his enemy. During the election Wogan not only encouraged the circulation of rumours that Perrot had died, he used his position as deputy lieutenant to threaten his opponents with impressment, a tactic once favoured by Perrot’s father Sir John. To further ensure victory, Wogan’s supporters either intimidated or physically beat all those who tried to make their way to the hustings to vote for Perrot. By such means Wogan was returned to parliament for the county while Perrot’s longstanding adversary Canon, was returned for the borough of Haverfordwest. For the first time in his long and distinguished political career, a despondent Perrot was left without a seat. Initially contemplating going abroad, he obtained a licence to travel, Perrot soon bounced back and petitioned the Commons committee for privileges to hear his complaint against Wogan whom he accused of electoral misdemeanours. Party to this mismanagement was the sheriff,

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John Lloyd of Hendre in St. Dogmaels (d.1637), whom the Commons committee called on to make his defence in preparation of the hearing. It is clear from his petition that Perrot intended to win his case at all costs, even if it incurred the wrath of parliament, for in suggesting that the sheriff's right to preside over the election had been voided by the death of King James, he was hinting at government negligence in failing to renew the authority of office holders on the assumption of power by a new king. The brevity of the parliamentary session, it was dissolved in August, ensured that nothing came of Perrot's petition and the matter was allowed to lapse.

The summoning of a new parliament in February 1626 once again plunged Perrot into conflict with his neighbours. Determined to return to the scene of earlier triumphs by standing for election in the borough, Perrot might have thought his passage to the Commons was assured; he was sadly mistaken. By fair means and foul, Canon had established himself in the town and had gathered around him a loyal following which Perrot had difficulty breaking down. Such was his inability to deny Canon victory in the forthcoming election that he sought to discredit him with the government in the person of the Secretary of State, Sir Edward Conway (d.1631), 1st Baron Conway. His charge that Canon had obtained, and then concealed, the writ of election from the proper authorities, namely the sheriff, Francis Kynner, was grave enough for action to be taken, but nothing was done. In seeking to enlist the help of so eminent a personage Perrot was drawn away from the Haverfordwest hustings to London during which time, and without his knowledge, the election was held and Canon returned. Perrot's failure to convince Conway of the charges may lead us to conclude that he had been set up or, at the very least, outwitted. In a letter to Conway Perrot wrote, 'I came hither to be of service to his Majesty, if I could have a place in Parliament, and to move moderation in case of interrupptions. But I fear I shall lose the place for which I often served'.⁷⁷ Lose he did, and for the second time in his parliamentary career he was left without a seat. Fortunately for Perrot fate and patronage played a hand when the newly returned member for Camelford in Cornwall, Sir Thomas Monck, was adjudged to be incapable of taking his seat and a replacement needed to be found. Due in all likelihood to the influence of the Earl of Pembroke, Perrot was returned for a constituency he had never visited and probably knew

little about but he did not let this deter him from serving in a Commons chamber he had come to regard as his natural home.

Unlike his colleagues Wogan and Canon, who were conspicuous by their anonymity in the Commons, Perrot buried himself in work by serving on numerous committees and taking part in various debates. It was to be a difficult parliament, being described by one eye-witness as ‘a long dis- content of eighteen weeks [which] brought forth nothing but a tympany of swelling faction and abrupt dissolution’.⁷⁸ As the working relationship between Commons and king progressively broke down the former sought a scapegoat in Charles’ unpopular first minister, George Villiers (d.1628), 1st Duke of Buckingham. As one MP put it: ‘We must of necessity lay the fault upon somebody. Upon the king we cannot, seeing his care and great wisdom. And upon the Council we cannot. But on nobody but the Lord Admiral’.⁷⁹ Articles of impeachment against Buckingham were drawn up by the Commons accusing him of mismanaging a disasterous naval expedition to Cadiz the previous year and for poisoning relations between it and the Crown. In view of Perrot’s wholehearted support of war with catholic Spain and his disgust at the failure of the expedition, he did not take part in proceedings against Buckingham. What concerned him most, besides religion, was the Crown’s profligacy which he thought needed investigating by means of a Commons select committee. By questioning the Crown’s demand for more money via renewed subsidies, Perrot was suggesting that it could raise a sum in the region of £80,000 without the aid of parliament if only the king would reduce his household expenditure and enforce the collection of the arrears of recusancy fines. The king was far from amused and, alarmed at the apparent belligerence of the Commons, he summoned both Houses and issued a stern warning: ‘Remember that parliaments are altogether in my power for their calling, sitting and dissolution. Therefore, as I find the fruits of them good or evil, they are to continue or not to be’.⁸⁰ It was in face of this threat that Perrot at least softened his hard line though a number of his colleagues refused to do so. The parliament was not long after dissolved and Perrot returned home to Pembrokeshire.

Perrot’s passage to the Commons in the election of 1628 was remarkably smooth. As far as is known, he was returned unopposed for Haverford- west while his enemy Canon sat for Haslemere in Surrey. Perrot served

in what would turn out to be the most turbulent parliament thus far of the Stuart era. In its meetings and resulting conflicts with the Crown were sown the seeds of future Civil War and had he but lived, it would have been interesting to see which side Perrot would have favoured. It is perhaps surprising that, having upheld the rights and privileges of parliament for nigh on thirty years, he took no discernible part in the debates concerning the Petition of Right. In attempting to define more clearly the subject's and its rights, parliament was on a collision course with King Charles who viewed the debates on the Petition with deep disfavour. As one MP declared, 'This is the crisis of parliaments. By this we shall know whether parliaments will live or die'.⁸¹ Although Perrot agreed with the Petition his only act in support of it was to address the House in which he demanded that the king, who had, hitherto, responded with sceptical equivocation, be called upon to give 'a clear and short answer'.⁸² Reluctantly, the king agreed to accept the Petition but all trust had been lost between king and parliament, a parliament, moreover, that was to be Perrot's last. In fact, it proved to be so for many of Perrot's colleagues also since the king had seen fit to remove himself of parliament judging it better to rule on his own. Thus was begun what early historians were once wont to call, though not altogether accurately, 'the Eleven Years of Tyranny'. If the belligerence of Parliament, and the Commons in particular, had convinced Charles to rule without it, it was due in no small measure to the likes of Perrot who played his part in alienating the king by his attacks on Richard Montagu (d.1641), bishop of Chichester and William Laud (d.1645), bishop of London. Perrot's antagonism stemmed mainly from their Arminianism, which was at variance with his pro-calvinist puritanism, but also because he thought they had lied by denying that they held such views. He was even prepared to swear on oath that Laud was a liar by calling on a fellow Pembrokian Robert Rudd of St. Florence (d.1648), to give evidence on his behalf. Rudd was a useful source of information since, as Archdeacon of St. David's (c.1607-44), he had served Laud during the latter's tenure as bishop of St. David's between 1621-6. Clearly, Rudd was in a privileged position to interpret Laud's attitudes and actions if not know what was in his mind. Unfortunately for Perrot, greater forces than him were at work which prevented him from taking the matter further. Undaunted, he had the last word in an uncompromising speech in which he warned his colleagues that 'the enemies of our religion are in agitation to break this parliament'.⁸³ That

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was to be Perrot's last speech in the Commons and with the business of the House concluded, parliament was dissolved and with it came the end of Perrot's political career.

Howell Lloyd provides a fitting epitaph for Perrot's extraordinarily full parliamentary career by declaring that he was 'an exceptional man, in political maturity far in advance not only of his Welsh colleagues but of most of the other members too. After the Pyms, Hampdens and Cromwells, Perrot deserves to be counted at least in the second rank'.⁸⁴

Notes

1. Lewys Dwnn, *Heraldic Visitations of Wales*, ed. S.R. Meyrick (2 vols., Llandovery, 1846), I, 90.
2. E.L. Barnwell, 'Notes on the Perrot Family', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 3rd. series, xii (1866), 488.
3. J. Foster (ed.), *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford 1500-1714* (4 vols., Oxford, 1891-2), III, 1149.
4. Quoted in A. Thrush's article on Sir James Perrot soon to be published in a forthcoming edition of the continuing series of histories of the House of Commons. A. Thrush, *The House of Commons 1603-29* (London).
5. T. Lloyd, *The Lost Houses of Wales* (London, 1986), 56.
6. Barnwell, *Arch. Camb.* (1866), 478-9.
7. PCC: Prob.11/83.
8. Barnwell, *Arch. Camb.* (1866), 478-9.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*; H.A.C. Sturgess & Sir H.F. Macgeagh (eds.), *Register of Admissions to . . . the Middle Temple from the Fifteenth Century to 1944* (3 vols., London, 1949), I, 61.
11. W.P. Griffith, *Learning, Law and Religion: Higher Education and Welsh Society c. 1540-1640* (Cardiff, 1996), 18.
12. B.E. Howells (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History, Vol. III. Early Modern Pembrokeshire 1536-1815* (Haverfordwest, 1987), 53; *Historical Manuscripts Commission: Hatfield House*, xvii, 555; P.W. Hasler (ed.), *The House of Commons 1558-1603* (3 vols., London, 1981), I, 328.
13. *HMC, Hatfield*, xvii, 555.
14. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, 1090.
15. C.66/1778/18. Problems continued with outlying properties until at least 1619. C.2/Jas.I/P23/30.
16. E.112/277/45, [f.1].
17. *HMC, Hatfield*, xvii, 555.
18. *Ibid.*
19. B.G. Charles, 'Records of the Borough of Newport in Pembrokeshire', *National Library of Wales Journal*, vii (1949), 39.

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20. Barnwell, *Arch. Camb.* (1866), 490-2.
21. *DWB*, 362, 753; Holland was well known to Perrot who sponsored him and of whom he referred to as 'that good knight', J.C. Davies, 'Letters of Admission', *NLWJ.*, iv (1945-6), 86.
22. Barnwell, *Arch. Camb.* (1866), 490-2; Dwnn, *Heraldic Visitations*, I, 90.
23. Barnwell, *Arch. Camb.* (1866), 488.
24. R.K. Turvey, 'NLW Roll 135: A Seventeenth-Century Pedigree Roll from Herefordshire', *NLWJ.*, xxx (1998), 388-91.
25. NLW, Dale Castle Pedigrees, 146.
26. Barnwell, cited; *Arch. Camb.* (1866), 124.
27. For full details, see Turvey, *op. cit.*, 388-91; G.D. Squibb, *Reports of Heraldic Cases in the Court of Chivalry 1623-1732* (Harleian Society, vol. 107, London, 1956), 44-6.
28. E.134/16 Chas.I/Mich.10, f.4.
29. Turvey, *op. cit.*, 381-2.
30. Barnwell, *Arch. Camb.* (1866), 488.
31. *Ibid.*, 489.
32. E.134/16 Chas.I/Mich.10, f.4.
33. Barnwell, *Arch. Camb.* (1865), 128.
34. *Ibid.*; F.J. Warren, *The History and Antiquities of St. Mary's Haverfordwest* (Letchworth, 1914), 41; Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* (2 vols., London, 1691), II, 606.
35. *Ibid.*
36. J.R.S. Phillips (ed.), *The Justices of the Peace in Wales and Monmouthshire 1541-1689* (Cardiff, 1975), 209-12, 214-17; Barnwell, *Arch. Camb.* (1866), 478-9.
37. Barnwell, *Arch. Camb.* (1866), 478-9.37. *HMC: Hatfield*, xi, 164; SP14/28/48.
38. SP14/33, f.4v; SP16/75/37.
39. Perrot dedicated his unpublished history of Ireland, 'To my singular good Lord William Erle of Pembroke'. H. Wood (ed.), *The Chronicle of Ireland 1584-1608* (Dublin, 1933), 1.
40. *Calendar of State Papers: Domestic*, 1629-31, 93; *Ibid.*, 1637, 33.
41. *Ibid.*, 1631-3, 66-7, 573, 582; *Addenda 1625-9*, 451-2.
42. C.181/3, f.97v.
43. *CSPD.*, 1634-35, 169-70. The commission was subsequently cancelled.
44. HCA 14/43, pt.3, ff.402, 404.
45. E.315/309, ff.137, 145.
46. Barnwell, *Arch. Camb.* (1866), 488-93.
47. B.G. Charles (ed.), *Calendar of the Records of the Borough of Haverfordwest 1539-1660* (Cardiff, 1967), 3.
48. Phillips, *Justices of the Peace*, 233-40
49. R.K. Turvey, 'Sir John Perrot and Haverfordwest' in D. Miles (ed.), *A History of Haverfordwest* (Llandysul, 1999), 153-76.
50. Charles, *Cal. Recs. Bor. Haverfordwest*, 44.
51. Miles, *Hist. Haverfordwest*, 223; Charles, *Cal. Recs. Bor. Haverfordwest*, 1-3.

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52. *Ibid.*, 46; Pembrokeshire Record Office (Haverfordwest), MS 31/2; LR1/237, f.200.
53. Charles, *Cal. Recs. Bor. Haverfordwest*, 43-4, 67-8;
54. E.179/224/598.
55. G.D. Owen, *Wales in the Reign of James I* (London, 1988), 78.
56. H.A. Lloyd, *The Gentry of South-West Wales 1540-1640* (Cardiff, 1968), 102.
57. J.E. Neale, 'More Elizabethan Elections', *English Historical Review*, lxi (1946), 23-4.
58. *Journals of the House of Commons* [hereafter *CJ*], vol. i, 1547-1628 (London, 1803), 172.
59. W.A. Shaw, *The Knights of England* (2 vols., London, 1971), II, 112. Shaw states that Perrot was knighted sometime after June 1603.
60. Lloyd, *Gentry*, 102.
61. *CJ*., 965a.
62. BL, Add. MSS, 34,218, f.21v. I owe this reference to Andrew Thrush.
63. *Acts of the Privy Council*, 1613-15, 460, 466.
64. *CJ*., 507b, 508a; W. Notestein & H. Simpson (eds.), *Commons Debates for 1621* (7 vols., New Haven, 1935), iv, 11.
65. See note 4.
66. Lloyd, *Gentry*, 104-5; *CD 1621*, iv, 28.
67. *CJ*., 509b; *CD 1621*, iv, 15.
68. *CJ*., 518a.
69. Lloyd, *Gentry*, 105.
70. *CJ*., 557.
71. *Ibid.*, 291 a-b.
72. Lloyd, *Gentry*, 105.
73. *CJ*., 563.
74. Wood, *Athenae*, II, 606.
75. *CJ*., 798.
76. See note 4.
77. *Calendar of State Papers: Ireland*, 1625-32, 91.
78. K. Brice, *The Early Stuarts* (London, 1994), 73.
79. *Ibid.*, 73.
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.*, 76.
82. R.C. Johnson *et al.* (eds.), *Commons Debates for 1628* (New Haven, 1977), iv, 140.
83. W. Notestein & F.H. Relf (eds.), *Commons Debates for 1629* (Minneapolis, 1921), 236.
84. Lloyd, *Gentry*, 107.

I wish to record my gratitude to Dr. Andrew Thrush for generously allowing me to read his forthcoming article on the political career of Sir James Perrot.

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ADMIRATION OR REVULSION: INTERPRETING THE LIFE, CAREER AND CHARACTER OF SIR JAMES PERROT (1571-1637)

By Roger Turvey

Part Two

Ireland

Like a moth to a naked flame Sir James Perrot seemed irresistably drawn to Ireland. Whether or not Ireland was 'a country for which he felt the deepest passion', there is no doubting Perrot's great fascination for and interest in Irish affairs.¹ The reasons for this are not easy to fathom, perhaps he saw Ireland as the land of opportunity to garner official goodwill by exemplary service or as a means to obtain plantation land on the cheap which, for many, had proved a valuable stepping stone to an Irish peerage. Of course, his interest may have been purely personal and unknown to us or, as seems likely, it stemmed from the links with the island and its people established by his late father, a man for whom he cared very deeply. Unlike a number of his ambitious contemporaries, Perrot actively sought service in Ireland but rather than wait on the Crown to appoint him to a position, he suggested to the king that one might be created especially for him! The post which Perrot thought was most suited to his talents was that of 'Cess-master', something akin to a tax-collector, but, in the event, the Crown did not take him up on his offer.² Nor, in spite of his entreaties, did the king appoint Perrot a member of the Commission for Defective Titles in 1606 the main object of which was to prevent prying into Irish land titles caused by the Crown's search for concealed lands.³ It is entirely possible that Perrot was encouraged in his desire to serve in Ireland by his newly acquired brother-in-law Sir Arthur Chichester who had been appointed Lord Deputy in February 1604 a little more than a year before his kinsman's petition (June 1605) to the Crown. If so, then even this close connection failed to work in his favour and Perrot was left to ponder on his next course of action.

Although thwarted in his earliest endeavour to serve in Ireland, Perrot ensured that he would not suffer the same fate twice and, almost exactly two years later in 1607, he travelled to Dublin to personally seek Chichester's patronage.⁴ Initially it seems Chichester had nothing for him but in

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June 1608 came his chance to impress his kinsman-by-marriage when he was given charge of escorting the suspected traitor Lord Delvin to London.⁵ Having safely delivered his prisoner Perrot returned to Dublin where a grateful and impressed Chichester rewarded him by making him a Gentleman Pensioner and appointing him to a military command as captain of foot.⁶ Unlike his father Sir John, Sir James had no experience of commanding men in the field nor had he, as far as is known, received any military training though he had tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex to employ him in his campaign in Ireland in 1599.⁷ Nor can this appointment be dismissed simply as a sinecure for he was soon after invested with the responsibility of safeguarding the Newry, a strategically vital outpost of English power in Ulster.⁸ The scene of some of the bitterest fighting in the so-called Nine Years' War which had engulfed Ulster between 1594 and 1603, there remained still a danger from roving rebels and the prospect of a resumption of the rebellion. Undeterred, Perrot threw himself into the task of commanding the garrison town distinguishing himself in several small scale but nonetheless, fiercely contested skirmishes with rebels whom he either apprehended or killed and for which he was duly commended by a grateful Privy Council.⁹ The dangers faced by Perrot in discharging his duty in Ireland were such as to persuade him to settle his estate in the event of his childless death. Consequently, and perhaps as a measure of the good relations established between himself and his brother-in-law, in 1609 he drew up the papers necessary to invest his godson, Chichester's step-son Thomas Laughrane, with his Pembrokeshire properties.

If Perrot had thought his service sufficient of reward in land or title he was to be bitterly disappointed since none came his way. Even an attempt in early 1610 to persuade the Crown to take up his offer to arrange for escheated land in Ulster to be planted with Protestant settlers failed.¹⁰ A possibly disillusioned Perrot returned home to Haroldston soon after where he resumed his Parliamentary career. Nevertheless, Irish affairs continued to interest Perrot who, in a letter dated November 1615, sought to persuade the Secretary of State Sir Ralph Winwood (d.1617) to re-establish the Commission for Defective Titles with himself as its leading member.¹¹ The suggestion fell on deaf ears inasmuch as the Commission was reformed but Perrot was not invited to take part in it. On the other hand, his perceived knowledge of and expertise in Irish affairs was

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considered worthy of his being invited, by Sir Thomas Wilson, Keeper of the Records at Whitehall, to continue the official history of that kingdom, which, hitherto, had been completed up to 1584.¹² In fact, Perrot had probably been working on an ‘Irish history’ of sorts for some time prior to his official invitation to search the normally inaccessible records stored at Whitehall. Royal license or personal connections were the only means by which those not employed by the Crown to care for official records stored in state repositories gained access to them; Perrot was among the privileged few.

After a gap of near a dozen years Perrot returned to Ireland in April 1622 to serve on the Irish Commission set up by the king’s newly appointed Lord-Treasurer Lionel Cranfield (d.1645). The commissioners’ brief was to inquire into such wide ranging matters as the ‘Church, college and free schools; trade; monopolies and grievances; courts of justice; army; plantations; woods and timber; offices in reversion and new offices; and revenue’.¹³ More controversially, the Commission had the power to recommend reform in some or all of the areas it had investigated. Cranfield’s Irish Commission aroused a great deal of opposition from powerful interests both at Court and in Ireland itself fearful not only of what the commissioners’ might find in the course of their investigations but how any proposed reform would impact on their jealously guarded rights and privileges. In spite of the fierce opposition this was a prestigious appointment and it is worthy of note that among the first names to be written in Cranfield’s original shortlist of candidates was that of Sir James Perrot.¹⁴ Even as the shortlist went through several revisions during 1621, resulting in deletions and additions, Perrot’s name remained. Taking their cue from contemporary opinion, historians once assumed that the ‘primary, sinister function of the Irish Commission was the chastisement of parliament men who had fallen foul of the king and Court’.¹⁵ Certainly, Perrot had aroused the enmity of the king during the 1621 Parliament when he criticized James’s right to match his heir to a Catholic princess and his temporary removal would have appealed to the Crown. However, given his propensity for rendering service, particularly where Ireland was concerned, it is possible to discount what Victor Treadwell has termed this ‘hallowed myth of banishment’.¹⁶

Apart from his perceived expertise in Irish affairs and acknowledged

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sharpness in Parliamentary matters what had prompted Cranfield to shortlist a man with whom he had had few dealings before 1621? The answer may lie in the identity of Cranfield's loyal agent and deputy, a man whom he trusted and had worked with for nigh on twenty years, Richard Perrot. Richard Perrot hailed originally from Morton-on-Lugg in Herefordshire and was descended of a family that claimed kinship with the Perrots of Pembrokeshire.¹⁷ If Richard Perrot did use his influence on behalf of his kinsman then it might help explain, at least in part, why, before he departed from Ireland in mid-April 1622, Sir James cancelled the entail of 1609 in favour of a new one drawn up naming as his heir the five-year-old son of Robert Perrot of Morton. The childless Richard was the younger brother of Robert and thus uncle to the newly-established heir of Sir James Perrot. It is probably no coincidence that Sir James's sister Lettice, for whom he cared deeply, had recently died, sometime in 1621, which may have greatly eased his decision to alter the disposition of his estates in the event of his death.

On arriving in Dublin Castle the commissioners set about their task which, by January 1623, they had completed. Their report was scathing, revealing slow progress in the plantations, neglect of and in the church and an inadequate and biased judiciary. More than that they suggested that the Irish government was on the point of bankruptcy caused not so much by faulty accounting procedures in the exchequer, though this was highlighted, but by widespread corruption. In their view reform was not only essential but urgent a fact that Cranfield used to browbeat his enemies at Court. Unfortunately for him, and his commissioners, the factions ranged against them at Court proved too strong and it took another ten years before the government acted upon the report's recommendations. Nevertheless, a grateful King James rewarded Cranfield with the earldom of Middlesex and, on the dismissal of Perrot and his fellow commissioners on 26 February 1623, expressed his thanks for their efforts which he liberally laced with hints of enhanced prospects of promotion.¹⁸ In fact, so impressed had the king been with Perrot's work, among others, that he intended to send him back to Ireland on a royal warrant to collect debts owed to the Crown. In the event, nothing came of this nor indeed of the royal warrants for payment of Perrot and his fellow commissioners which proved uncashable!¹⁹ Having worked so hard in Ireland, during which time he suffered a short illness in the summer, Perrot must

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have felt despondent and angry at having to forgo payment for his widely acknowledged good service. Nor did the promised promotion come his way though he did earn the trust and respect of Cranfield but if he thought this might lead to greater opportunities he was to be sadly disappointed.

Sometime in 1623 he lost through death the friendship and support of his kinsman, and Cranfield's able deputy, Richard Perrot followed in April 1624 by Cranfield's fall from power.²⁰ Impeached, tried and convicted in the space of weeks the once-powerful Cranfield was humbled and though he was soon released from the Tower he played no part in high politics thereafter but settled himself into comfortable retirement. The forces ranged against Cranfield were too powerful for Perrot which might explain why he played no part in the impeachment process other than to suggest that the accused should, at the very least, be permitted to have a copy in writing of his alleged misdemeanours.²¹ Undeterred it seems by these setbacks, Perrot continued to lobby for office by offering projects for cheapening Irish defence in 1625 and by pressing Secretary of State Sir Edward Conway to be sent over to Ireland in 1626 to uncover plots and treasons now that England was at war with Spain.²² Again, nothing came of his efforts but he was later, in 1628, appointed to a committee to attend the Irish Lord Chancellor, Adam Loftus (d.1643), and 'to take informations' on the state of Ireland and the problem of recusancy.²³ This was to be his last contact with Irish affairs and he was never, after 1623, to set foot in Ireland again. It must have been a source of grave disappointment to Perrot that, in spite of his considerable efforts, his Irish adventure never yielded the kind of rewards enjoyed by some of his contemporaries. There was to be no land, no title and no money only the satisfaction of tasks well done in the service of the Crown.

Academic and Literary pursuits

This aspect of Perrot's life was much less a career in the remunerative sense than a hobby if a very personal and important one. The seeds of Perrot's love of classical scholarship, history and genealogical study were sown in his youthful years at Oxford University. Here he developed a passion for learning which, if Anthony Wood is to be believed, was reinforced by Continental travel and from which he 'return'd an

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accomplish'd Gentleman'.²⁴ Not unusually he did not take his degree and nor was he ever called to the bar in spite of having attended the Middle Temple. Perrot's inclinations were those of an academic content with pursuing a literary career and it was not long before he had established his reputation as a scholar of note. The following were published during his lifetime – *Discovery of Discontented Minds . . .* (1596), *The First Part of the Consideration of Humane Condition . . .* (1600), an *Invitation unto Prayer* (1624) and *Meditations and Prayers on the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments* (1630) – but he is known to have written considerably more. He is acknowledged to be the author of *The Chronicle of Ireland 1584-1608* (written sometime during 1618-20 but not published until 1933 by Herbert Wood) and to have composed a biographical piece, now missing, entitled *A Book of the Birth, Education, Life and Death and singular good parts of Sir Phillip Sydney*.²⁵ He should also be credited with having written another biography entitled *The Life, deedes and death of Sir John Perrott, knight*, which remained in manuscript until its publication in 1728 by Richard Rawlinson. He had evidently not wasted his time at the Inns of Court for his legal expertise was such that he was later to author a now lost, but clearly impressive, 58-page treatise entitled 'A Discourse of Lawes' which he dedicated to Charles I.²⁶ On the other hand, and contrary to some current opinion, there is no evidence to link him to the publication in 1626 of *The Government of Ireland under the Honourable, Just, and Wise Governour Sir John Perrot, Knight*.²⁷

Clearly, Perrot was a man of much industry and his aim in publishing the three tracts was no doubt motivated by his personal interests and beliefs. The first publication, thirty-four pages long which he dedicated to Essex, *Discovery of Discontented Minds, wherein their several purposes are described, especially such as go beyond the seas* was very much the product of his youth and its aim was to discourage the plots of disaffected English who had settled abroad. In the opinion of a clearly impressed William Oldys (d.1761), antiquary and Norroy king-of arms, Perrot's publication was 'discreetly and learnedly handled, for a young man of twnety five years of age'.²⁸ His second work, *The First Part of the Consideration of Humane Condition: wherein is contained the Morall Consideration of a Man's Selfe: as what, who, and what manner of Man he is*, was part of an altogether more ambitious project which was never realised. Printed, like the first, at Oxford Perrot dedicated this work to

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the University's Chancellor Thomas Sackville (d.1608), 2nd Baron Buckhurst, one of the judges at his father's trial for treason! The work was to be followed by three further parts dealing respectively with the political consideration of things under us, the natural consideration of things about us, and the metaphysical consideration of things above us. Although never printed if Perrot completed these tracts in manuscript then, like so much of his other works, they have been lost to us. It took some twenty years before Perrot ventured into print again and he did so by following up his unfinished philosophical work with two on religion. Dedicated to Elizabeth (d.1662), Queen of Bohemia, daughter of King James I and William Herbert (d.1630), 3rd Earl of Pembroke, respectively, his *An Invitation unto Prayer and Meditations and Prayers on the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments* was very much in keeping with his preoccupation on matters spiritual and puritanical and is devoted less to the salvation of people's souls than for the nourishing of their minds and spirits.

It is likely that having written and appended the dedicatory epistle, usually a prelude to publication, to his *A continuance of the Chronicle of Ireland, begynninge at the yere 1584 (where the last writer of that conries historie lefte) and endinge with the yere 1616*, suggests that this work was indeed destined for print. The fact that Perrot's narrative history never got beyond 1608 need not have dissuaded him from publishing the work but we shall never know for sure why he held back having already dedicated the work to his then patron William Herbert. The same might be said of his father's biography, concentrating for the most part on his Irish adventures but with a view to rehabilitating his tarnished reputation, which was near completion when he finished work on it some time in the early 1620s but never published. He might have been dissuaded from doing so after the publication in 1626 of the *The Government of Ireland* which did much to fill in the details of his father's rule in Ireland. Nor did he publish his *Life* of Sir Phillip Sydney again perhaps because he got wind of the fact that someone else more suited to the task was similarly engaged namely, Sir Fulke Greville (d.1628), 1st Baron Brooke. Greville was an intimate of Sidney having been at school and come to Court together so that his knowledge of the man was far superior to that gleaned by Perrot who was but fourteen years old at the time of his subject's death in 1586. On the other hand, William Oldys' faith in

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Perrot's skill as a biographer was such that he was of the firm opinion that his work 'would, in all probability, set forth that gallant and accomplished gentleman's virtues and actions in a more conspicuous light than does appear in the faint and inexpensive draught that has been left to us by his great friend Sir Faulke Greville'.²⁹ Although Greville never published his biography, this was left to others in 1652, it is inconceivable that Perrot did not know about it given his literary contacts.

The reasons why Perrot should not have published more during his life will probably never be known. His public duties in local administration, in Ireland and in Parliament may have conspired to curtail his literary activities but he was, nonetheless, active in generously supporting others. We know that he supported his close friend and fellow scholar Sir William Vaughan (d.1641) of Llangyndeyrn in his publication entitled *The Golden Grove Moralized in Three Bookes* (2nd edn., 1608) to which Perrot was invited to compose some commendatory verses that were subsequently prefixed to the work.³⁰ As the antiquary John Smyth of Nibley in Gloucestershire testifies Perrot was a keen correspondent and he records the help given to him in his unpublished manuscript *The Lives of the Berkeleys* written in 1618. Another of his correspondents was his distant cousin Robert Perrot of Morton in Herefordshire who was responsible for compiling a large, complex and extraordinary pedigree for part of which Sir James had supplied valuable data. Besides writing, Perrot was also a collector of books and manuscripts and we can but wonder at the size and contents of his library at Haroldston. It is known that he possessed a copy of Sion Dafydd Rhys' *Cambrobrytannicae cymraecaeve linguae institutiones et rudimenta accurate* published in 1592, now in the library of the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, in which is affixed the following 'Liber Iacobi Perroti militis, ex dono Edouardi Stradling'.³¹ The significance of this book is that it shows that Perrot had an interest in the Welsh language since the book is essentially a Grammar though half the volume deals with the art of Welsh poetry.³²

Another volume that graced the library shelves at Haroldston was the so-called Haroldston Calendar, a Book of Hours that dates from the last quarter of the fifteenth century, which had been passed down through the family. Although a devotional instrument of the catholic faith, the Puritan Perrot seemed to have been comfortable in his possession of it, though it

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is clear that he did not add to its content unlike his equally Protestant father who, by his own hand, extended the family pedigree contained within. It is worth speculating that the Calendar might well have been used by Perrot's recusant wife Mary. As may be inferred from some of his contemporaries, genealogy can be counted among his many interests since it is clear that Perrot had access to or was in possession of pedigrees, or he had the means and skill to compile his own. The pedigree of the Perrots of Pembrokeshire inscribed on the roll compiled by his kinsman from Herefordshire, Robert Perrot, is unique in several crucial respects from those drawn up by the heralds of the day including Lewys Dwnn, and can only have come from Sir James.³³ To judge from much of what he wrote, quoted from and referenced it is certain that Perrot's library contained a fair collection of classical titles, works by such as Cicero, Juvenal, Virgil and Ovid, together with contemporary translations and commentaries like Sir Thomas North's 1579 edition of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*.³⁴ In view of his membership of and subscription to the Virginia Company it is perhaps not surprising to learn that he was interested too in the social and political lives of the native Americans.³⁵

The scope and variety of his literary tastes and interests reveal him to have been a man of considerable learning and intellect. Perrot was very much the product of his time, a humanist scholar of the Renaissance period, who delighted in his university education and the contacts that resulted from his three years at Oxford and two years in London. However, there were other influences much closer to home, his father Sir John Perrot had been the proud owner of a library that included books in French, Spanish, Greek and Latin together with music books, but the most intriguing volume in his collection must surely be the 'verie bigge booke in fol[io] writen on parchment treatinge of the lawes of Howell Dha, & other British lawes'.³⁶ Unfortunately, Perrot had lent the book to either Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley (d.1598) or to his son Sir Robert Cecil (d.1612). As far as can be determined it was never returned and may yet still be in the possession of the Cecils of Hatfield.³⁷ Nor should it be forgotten that Sir James' great-uncle Rhys or Rice Perrot (d.1570) had been reader in Greek to the boy-king Edward VI which suggests a level of learning beyond the ordinary especially for a man not known to have attended any of the country's institutions of higher learning. Clearly, Sir James was a chip off the old block though considerably more

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talented than some of the ‘old blocks’ that had perhaps encouraged or inspired him.

Character

Although noethinge can be sayd soe generall and universal of the qualities of any nation but in particular may be subject to exceptions, for that mens dispositions in all places doe differ, and as the common sayinge is: “soe many men, soe many mindes”. Yet doe we finde that men doe much incline both in the constitution of theyr bodies and condition of theyr myndes accordinge to the naturall habite of theyr parentes, diet, ayer, and exercise they use for the one, faculties, organs, education, and conversation they receive of the other. In both theise the soyle and scituatioun of the contrie, with the example of the contrimen where any persons have theyr byrthe and breedinge, hath a greate stroake to frame mens myndes unto vertue or vice, boldness or bashfullness, moderation or extremmitie.³⁸

As may be evidenced from this short but revealing extract from the *Chronicle of Ireland*, Perrot too found time to muse on the influences and qualities that framed a person’s character. In his opinion it was not only the example set by parents, family and neighbours that helped ‘to frame mens myndes’ but the very ‘soyle and scituatioun of the contrie’. Clearly being the child of Sir John Perrot and a son of Pembrokeshire did much to shape and influence Sir James Perrot’s character. Whether he was inclined by these twin influences towards ‘vertue or vice’ is a matter for debate but one thing is certain in his temperament he was a man of bold rather than bashful passion.

Unfortunately we do not know what Sir James Perrot looked like. There are no known portraits and we have no written description of him. On the other hand, we have no shortage of opinions on the man’s character, mainly inferred from his actions, since Perrot seemingly had the capacity to excite the interest of both contemporaries and modern historians. To his contemporaries Perrot was, it seems, a figure to be respected especially for his firm religious beliefs for as his earliest biographer, Daniel Morrice, was wont to say of him ‘he was very zealous for the common

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interest of Religion and the kingdom'.³⁹ Only in respect of his parliamentary career can he be said to have courted controversy because he was, in the opinion of Anthony Wood, 'a frequent and bold, if not a passionate speaker'.⁴⁰ According to Wood Perrot was to be 'numbered among the ill temper'd spirits' who frequently angered the establishment by his brave, if sometimes unwise, persistence in matters of some sensitivity.⁴¹ Yet he was also 'an accomplish'd gentleman' who wished to be a part of the very establishment he attacked which is perhaps why he may be said never to have truly fulfilled his potential. Indeed, the way in which he offered himself so readily for service and reward in Ireland suggests a man of impatient ambition who was prepared to exploit any opportunity that came his way whether it be through family, friends or acquaintances. Herein lies the difficulty in determining Perrot's true character for only in hindsight has contemporary admiration for the man turned to something akin to revulsion. Contemporaries were far less critical of Perrot than modern historians some of whom may be guilty of judging him by the standards of twentieth-century morality.

In the far from flattering opinion of the late Professor A.H. Dodd, Perrot was a 'hedger in politics while remaining a last-ditcher in religion'.⁴² Dodd is among the few modern historians who have been critical of Perrot's parliamentary career but it was his earnest conviction that despite 'his outspoken criticisms of ecclesiastical policy . . . he always stoutly protested his loyalty to Church and State'.⁴³ The apparent incompatibility of his actions suggests that Dodd believed Perrot was a man of shifting rather than firm opinions perhaps even bordering on hypocrisy. Certainly there is evidence of Perrot trimming his sails when the occasion demanded but this is as much a feature of modern politics as much as it ever was in the Stuart period! It is his actions in respect of his religious convictions, his *odium theologicum* in Dodd's uncompromising view, that have most plagued Perrot and attracted most criticism. In G. Dyfnallt Owen's opinion, writing exactly forty years after Dodd, Perrot was a man who exhibited a 'total unconcern for spiritual sensitivities other than his own'.⁴⁴ He was particularly critical of 'the manner in which he [Perrot] harassed a defenceless woman recusant, Anne Heyward of Haverfordwest'.⁴⁵ Her refusal to be cowed into submission by the weight of local authority in the person of Perrot, who had a 'hearty dislike of Catholics', and his colleagues, the Mayor and Council of Haverfordwest, made her a target.

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Indeed, the open way in which she conducted herself and the means by which she hoped to avoid persecution and prosecution by claiming to be a subject of the Spanish Netherlands, incensed the local authorities who clearly believed her to be a liar. Guilty or not, it was their treatment of her, led by Perrot, that has given rise to the revulsion of those involved in the unfortunate case. The matter was only resolved after the Spanish ambassador lodged a complaint at her treatment at Court which, in the interests of international peace and diplomacy, prompted the king's Privy Council to order Perrot and the town council to desist from harrassing her further.⁴⁶

Was Perrot an insensitive bully as interpreted by Owen in his actions towards Anne Heyward or was he justified in his pursuit of her? Perrot believed so for he claimed, correctly, that she was acting in contravention of the law and that if she were allowed to practise her religion others might follow suit. Perrot may have acted within the law but the means by which it was applied might give rise to revulsion particularly when he himself was forced to declare some two years later, in 1624, that his own wife was a practising Catholic. His hypocrisy is clearly evident but made worse by the fact that he was among the more persistent parliamentarians who called for the proper enforcement of the penal laws. His dogged pursuit of Anne Hayward shows that he practised what he preached but obviously not in respect of his own wife! Indeed, at the very time he was 'persecuting' Anne Hayward Perrot delivered a speech in the Commons giving vent to his opposition to Prince Charles' proposed marriage with a Spanish princess because of the dangers inherent in mixed marriages which he thought were as perilous 'even in private families' let alone 'among princes'.⁴⁷ Why Perrot, a seemingly die-hard Puritan, should contract a marriage with a Catholic recusant is a mystery? How they met or who conducted the marriage negotiations on their behalf is also unknown but suffice to say Perrot had apparently little difficulty in overcoming his prejudice against Catholics where a wife was concerned.

Nor was his ill-disposition caused only by his revulsion of Catholicism, Perrot expressed a hearty dislike of some of his contemporaries whom he pursued mercilessly when they dared affront his dignity. One among those for whom Perrot reserved his especial hatred was Sir Thomas Canon, 'his professed enemy' whose name he attempted to blacken in

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the very highest circles.⁴⁸ For example, in December 1605 Perrot wrote to Lord Zouche, Lord President of the Council of Wales, in which he implicated Canon, by reason of his being ‘of late very inward with those nearest to the earl of Northumberland’, in the Gunpowder Plot.⁴⁹ Although Perrot suggested that Canon’s servants be interrogated by ‘those least affected to Canon, and therefore most to be trusted’, namely, Henry White, Nicholas Adams, Thomas Lloyd and Devereux Barrett, Justices of Pembrokeshire, nothing came of the charges.⁵⁰ No doubt Canon pled successfully that the charges were not only ridiculous but those charged with his investigation were all pro-Perrot! The cause of their dissension is not known but it was of sufficient venom as to induce each to attempt to ruin and destroy the other. In 1626 Perrot wrote to the Secretary of State Sir Edward Conway to complain bitterly that Canon had usurped his right to represent Haverfordwest in parliament by ‘forestalling and concealing his Majesty’s writ’.⁵¹ However, his attempt to sully Canon’s reputation and have him expelled from the Commons for gross misconduct failed. Their vendetta preoccupied the pair for the best part of thirty five years and only ended on the death of Perrot in February 1637. Canon, who died late the following year, was no saint being involved in disputes with some of the most powerful and powerless men in the county. He was accused of being a ‘turbulent person’ given to intimidating by threats of litigation those whom he would oppress.⁵²

Of course there were those, many in fact, who thought well of Sir James Perrot. One such was Sir Herbert Perrot, a distant relation who benefitted greatly by being nominated his heir in 1622 when he was but five years old. In the drawing up of his will in June 1682 Sir Herbert desired that his wife

Dame Susan Perrot . . . build and erect in St. Mary’s Church in the towne and county of Haverford west a monument or comely grave stone over the body of Sir James Perrot upon which . . . may in legible characters be engraved thereon these words following viz Here lyeth the body of Sir James Perrot of Haroldston in the county of Pembroke Knight who deceased about two and forty years since. He was by the suffrage of all a very pious learned and charitable Gentleman.⁵³

It is with much regret that nothing but a small fragment of Perrot’s tomb

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now remains to be seen in St. Mary's. The cause of its destruction is unknown but it suggests that Perrot's fame had a limited shelf life and that with each passing year the memory of his achievements gradually slipped from the collective consciousness of St. Mary's parishioners. Certainly the Rev. E.L. Barnwell, writing in the mid 1860s and among the earliest contributors to modern Perrot historiography, thought fit to all but ignore him. Apart from printing his will Barnwell did not credit the man with any achievement save being the bastard son of Sir John Perrot.⁵⁴ Henry Owen, writing at the turn of the twentieth century, proved more sympathetic to Perrot describing him as 'a distinguished Parliamentary orator, and . . . an author of no mean repute'.⁵⁵ Perhaps the final word on Perrot should be left to one who knew him and from whom he received generous patronage, Robert Holland (d.1622). To this cleric, author and translator the master of Haroldston would forever be 'that good knight'⁵⁶

Notes

1. Quoted in A. Thrush's article on Sir James Perrot to be published in a forthcoming edition of the continuing series of histories of the House of Commons. A. Thrush, *The House of Commons 1603-29* (London).
2. *HMC, Hatfield*, xvii, 257, 296-7.
3. V. Treadwell, *Buckingham and Ireland 1616-1628: A Study in Anglo-Irish Politics* (Dublin, 1998), 355 n.77.
4. *CSPI, 1606-8*, 547.
5. *Ibid.*, 558, 564.
6. *Ibid.*, 568, 576.
7. *HMC, Hatfield*, ix, 54.
8. *Ibid.*, 150.
9. *Ibid.*, 150, 219.
10. *CSPI, 1608-10*, 366.
11. *Ibid.*, 1615-25, 97-8.
12. H. Wood (ed.), *The Chronicle of Ireland 1584-1608* (Dublin, 1933), v-vi.
13. Treadwell, *op. cit.*, 193.
14. *HMC, Sackville (Knole) MS*, 285.
15. Treadwell, *op. cit.*, 186. See *ante*, 11, 23n.74.
16. *Ibid.*
17. R.K. Turvey, 'NLW Roll 135: A Seventeenth-Century Pedigree Roll from Herefordshire', *NLWJ*, xxx (1998), 373-404.
18. Treadwell, *op. cit.*, 214.
19. Turvey, *NLWJ*, xxx (1998), 402.
20. *Acts of the Privy Council, 1621-3*, 422.

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21. See note 1.
22. Treadwell, *op. cit.*, 286.
23. See note 1.
24. Wood, *Athenae*, II, 606.
25. *DNB*, XLV, 19-20.
26. A.H. Dodd, 'The Pattern of Politics in Stuart Wales', *THSC* (1948), 23.
27. One name put forward as a possible author is Sir Edward Cecil, Viscount Wimbledon (d.1638). *DNB*, IX, 395-6.
28. Catalogue of Harleian Pamphlets no. 12.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *DWB*, 996.
31. J.R. Kenyon (ed.), *A Catalogue of the Library of the National Museum of Wales* (Cardiff, 1992), vol.I., 71-2 n.263. Sir Edward Stradling of St. Donat's met the cost of printing 1,250 copies of the book.
32. R.Geraint Gruffydd (ed.), *A Guide to Welsh Literature c.1530-1700* (Cardiff, 1997), 230.
33. See Turvey, *NLWJ*, xxx (1998), 373-404.
34. For a fuller discussion, see Roger Turvey (ed.), *A Critical Edition of Sir James Perrot's 'The Life, deedes and death of Sir John Perrott, Knight'* (Lewiston, 2002), i-xl.
35. *Ibid.*, *DNB*, XLV, 20.
36. Daniel Huws, *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Cardiff, 2000), 302 no. 20.
37. Thus far the book has not been found.
38. *Chronicle of Ireland*, 14.
39. Dr. Williams' Library, Morrice MS 31J, 1636(2).
40. Wood, *Athenae*, II, 606.
41. *Ibid.*
42. A.H. Dodd, *THSC* (1948), 23.
43. *Ibid.*
44. G.D. Owen, *Wales in The Reign of James I* (Woodbridge, 1988), 81.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.* I hope to publish a paper dealing with the circumstances surrounding the Hayward case.
47. *CD* 1621, ii, 488-9.
48. *HMC, Hatfield*, xvii, 555.
49. *Ibid.*; *Calendar of State Papers, 1603-10*, 201.
50. *HMC, Hatfield*, xvii, 555.
51. PRO, SP16/18/63.
52. NLW, Slebech MSS, 3253; H.A. Lloyd, *The Gentry of South-West Wales, 1540-1640* (Cardiff, 1968), 160.
53. E.L. Barnwell, *Perrot Notes* (London, 1867), 214. The original will can be found in the Worcester Record Office, Lord Hampton (Pakington) MSS.
54. Barnwell, *Perrot Notes*, 189-94.
55. Henry Owen, *Old Pembroke Families* (London, 1902), 59.
56. *DWB*, 362.